

NFU SCOTLAND'S FOUR KEY IMMIGRATION POLICY PRIORITIES:

1. In the immediate term the UK Government must scale up the quota of non-EU nationals that are being allowed to take up seasonal posts for a trial period in 2019 and 2020 under the pilot seasonal agricultural workers scheme. Currently the scheme will allow 2,500 non-EU nationals to take up posts whilst freedom of movement is still in operation during the Brexit transition. However, based on projected shortages within the industry, it is understood that 10,000 non-EU nationals will be needed within the sector in 2019.
2. The UK Government must clarify the status of EU nationals in the event of a no-deal Brexit. Advice from the government suggests that in the event of no-deal, EU nationals will still be able to come to the UK for a three-month period, following which they will need to apply for an extension of up to three years. This is causing EU nationals considering roles in the UK, as well as Scottish employers, a huge amount of uncertainty. NFU Scotland is calling on the government extends the period to 12 months.
3. The UK Government is currently consulting on a new immigration system which will allow 'low skilled' workers to come to the UK to take up posts for up to one year, immediately followed by a 12-month 'cooling off' period. It is the NFU Scotland position that for members who employ workers, this proposal would be totally unworkable and a disincentive to employing staff and training them up, only for them to have to leave after the initial 12 months. Any new immigration system must allow individuals to take up posts and upskill in those posts, with a view to staying on for a longer period or permanently.
4. The UK Government is also consulting on whether a wage threshold of £30,000 should apply for any prospective migrants coming to take up posts in the UK. NFU Scotland has strongly refuted this proposal as an arbitrary threshold with little or no basis in the reality of employment patterns within Scottish agriculture or food and drink processing.



NFU Scotland's Horticulture Working Group Chairman, James Porter, giving evidence on the UK Government's Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill in Westminster.